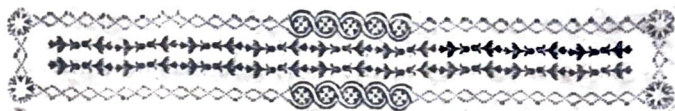


Undissembled Love
TO
G O D A N D M A N,
THE GREAT DUTY OF
CHRISTIANS AND FREE MASONS;
ILLUSTRATED IN THE FOLLOWING
D I S C O U R S E,
DELIVERED BEFORE THE
GRAND LODGE
OF
Free and Accepted Masons
OF THE
STATE OF RHODE-ISLAND,
ON THE 24th OF JUNE, 1800, IN THE
BAPTIST MEETING-HOUSE
IN
P R O V I D E N C E.

—♦♦♦♦♦—
BY STEPHEN GANO,
Pastor of the Baptist Church and Congregation.
—♦♦♦♦♦—

P R O V I D E N C E :
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1800.



A

DISCOURSE.



ROMANS, xii. 9.

LET LOVE BE WITHOUT DISSIMULATION. AB-
HOR THAT WHICH IS EVIL; CLEAVE
TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD.

MAN, as originally from the hand of his Creator, was endowed with certain passions, which had their propensities to the pure source of light from whence they sprang. But in his present degenerate condition, those passions being perverted from their proper bias, he stands in need of divine assistance, to regulate the affections of his heart, to produce that order and harmony in society, which are essential to his happiness. To accomplish this important and glorious design, God has graciously been pleased to furnish us with his holy word, as a "*light that shineth in a dark place.*" From this source of heavenly wisdom, we learn our duty and obligations to God and one another, as mutually related to the same beneficent Parent. We, therefore, discover throughout the sacred pages, the be-

lief of the truth, always connected with practical religion ; since they in the most solemn and impressive manner, inculcate the observance of those duties, which are intimately connected with the peace and happiness of our neighbour and ourselves. We were never formed to be Misanthropists.

IN harmony with these ideas, the Apostle in the former part of this epistle, takes a comprehensive view of the medium of our justification before God, as consisting in the atoning merits and righteousness of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. He then proceeds to build upon this "*chief corner stone,*" a superstructure of practical piety, which is honorable to God, and highly beneficial to the interests and happiness of man as a social being. In the chapter, from which the text is selected, he presses upon his brethren, in the most earnest and affectionate manner, their duty to God and one another. His own language, in the context, is truly energetic and persuasive : "*I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service ; and be not conformed to this world ; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of*

saith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." It will be observed that the inspired Writer clearly portrays our different duties, according to our different gifts and offices, so that each one of us fill our respective offices, and exercise our special talents, with a view to the advantage of the whole body. However different our talents or offices may be, there is one duty common to every member of the body, and indispensably binding upon them all; the duty enjoined in the text: "*Let Love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*"

In further speaking from these words, I propose the following method:

- I. Shew the objects of our love, and how it is to be exercised without dissimulation.
- II. Briefly attend to the remaining part of the text, and consider its propriety.
- III. Draw some conclusions suited to the present occasion.

I SHALL consider the objects of our love, &c. God and man are the proper objects of our love. To love God, the fountain of light and life, the Sovereign Architect of all worlds, and the All-wise Ruler and Preserver of all beings, is a duty eternally binding, upon all rational and intelligent creatures. A duty, taught by the voice of reason, for "*all his works praise him,*" and proclaim his wisdom, power, goodness, and Godhead. Hence it becomes man to join the mute expressive notes of inanimate nature, and with love and adoration, to shout praise to his God and King! Reason declares that "*in him we live, and move, and have our being,*" and consequently declares, *He should be the object of our supreme love.* But this is also sanctioned by the high mandate of heaven, in the sacred records of divine truth. Thus Jesus Christ explains the moral law, as consisting in loving "God, with all the heart, might, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves." But God should be loved with all the heart, without dissimulation. For "*God is not to be mocked.*" He rightfully claims the whole heart: "*My son, give me thy heart.*" We should love him, as manifested unto us in creation, and especially as in his word. "*the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,*" and also as a just and holy Being, who cannot behold sin with approbation. This love to God, without dissimulation, involves our prompt obedience to his holy will. For

if we have no disposition to serve or obey him, there is no propriety in saying we love him. For Jesus said, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*" And again, "*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*" It is not singly drawing nigh with our lips, while our hearts are far from him; that constitutes sincere love to the Supreme Being. It is to possess such a sense of his exalted, glorious character, as will bow the soul with holy fear, reverence, and gratitude, before his effulgent brightness; and excite us to sing with the royal Psalmist, "*Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds; thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.*" *Psalms xxxvi. 5.*

UNDISSEMBLED love to God, is evidenced by a sincere love to our brethren. "*For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen.*" And "*he that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.*" Were it necessary, passages of scripture, in great numbers, might be produced, to prove this important truth. But when we reflect that the origin of our being, is from the same source of light and life, the preservation of life, with all the blessings that surround us, flow from the same gra-

cious hand ; and that we are all the children of frailty and want, it certainly behoves us to exercise and cultivate the benevolent principle of love to one another. If the Great Jehovah, "*commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for the ungodly,*" surely we ought to "*love one another with pure hearts fervently.*" Jesus Christ has made this a material characteristic of discipleship. "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*" And the beloved disciple John, in harmony with his divine Master, saith, "*We know that we have passed from death, unto life, because we love the brethren.*" We are also instructed by the same source of heavenly wisdom, that our love should not be confined, within the narrow circle of a particular party ; but like the Sun in the heavens, which enlightens the natural world, be as diffusive, as there are rational beings to be benefitted by the heavenly flame. The good and virtuous of every name will unavoidably call forth the affections of similar characters. But it is a particular trait of our Lord's doctrine, that it enjoins love to our enemies, and requires us to show our love, by our forgiving tempers and conduct towards them, as well as by our prayers for them. This love to enemies, does not demand our approbation of their evil tempers, or vicious conduct.

DISSIMULATION cuts the sinews of all confidence in the dissembler, and destroys that peace and hap-

piness which arises from a firm reliance upon the professions of friends. Hence deceit must meet as it merits, the just indignation of every honest and upright heart, who loves and seeks the happiness of mankind.

To exercise love without dissimulation, it is essential that our conduct exactly square with our professions. This sentiment is most clearly expressed by the Evangelist John, "*Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*" The Apostle James has also shewn his disapprobation of empty, deceitful professions of friendship. "*If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit.*" Much of our blessed Saviour's ministry was pointed reproofs against those dissemblers, whose pretences and practices were in direct opposition. We hence learn that undissembled love to our brethren, consists in seeking their happiness, by doing them good, according to our opportunity and ability; and includes unfeigned love to their bodies and souls.

To love the souls of our fellow men, or to seek their eternal interests, is an important branch of this love. As the blessings of time bear no proportion to the blessings of eternity, it becomes us to have a special regard to the immortal part of man. But the question arises, how can we promote their eternal

interest? I answer, by advice and example. By advising them to seek those objects which are heavenly and eternal; by informing them of the danger and misery there is in sin; by placing before them the pleasures of "*Faith, Hope, and Charity*;" by endeavouring to reclaim them from their sinful ways, and by shewing them that true holiness dignifies and enobles human nature, while "*sin is a reproach to any people*." The law of love and kindness dwelling in the tongue, will best force its way to a brother's heart, by the power of example; and will shew that from love to the truth, we ourselves are walking in the peaceful and pleasant paths of truth and wisdom. Hence our Saviour's direction is most suitable, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*." And he, who is instrumental in converting a sinner from the error of his ways, saves a soul from death, and hideth a multitude of sins.

WHEN love is exercised without dissimulation, it will lead us to seek the happiness of mankind as to the present life; hence their good name, as better than precious ointment, and as a jewel of inestimable value, will be considered most sacred. To speak in the commendation of a brother, if consistent with truth, will afford the benevolent heart sincere pleasure. This temper has its opposite in slander, which like secret fire, consumes the goodly fabric, and the ruin is completed before we are aware of it. This

sin is offensive to God, and all good men. For the Most Holy describing an inhabitant of his holy hill, particularly mentions him who "*backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*" And King David, speaking of his determination to serve the Lord, with his house, declares, that "Who so privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off." *Psalms* ci. 5. Hence all reviling, backbiting, and calumniating, are utterly incompatible with genuine undissembled love. The magnitude and baseness of the detestable crime of slander, is in a few words expressed by the celebrated Shakespeare, with his usual propriety and brilliancy.

"The man, who steals my purse, steals trash;

"Twas mine, tis his, and may be slave to thousands;

"But he, who pilfers from me my good name,

"Robs me of that, which not enriches him,

"But makes me poor indeed."

ANOTHER branch of this undissembled love to our brethren, consists in sympathizing with the mourner, and stretching forth the kind hand of relief to the indigent and miserable. Infinite wisdom has diversified the external conditions of men, as well as their mental talents. But there are none of the great family of mankind, who want not, at certain seasons, the soothing voice and heart of friendship. For the most elevated state of human greatness, does not prevent the encroachments of sickness, pain, and death. And great prosperity does

not secure from its sad reverse. What a striking example does Job furnish us. To day he is surrounded with his family, wealth, honour, and professed friends; to-morrow he is precipitated into the extreme of misery, and forced to exclaim, "*Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.*" But there are many, who struggle through life's rugged path, under the pressure of poverty and woe, who peculiarly want the sympathetic attentions of friends to comfort them in their afflicted hours. "To weep with them who weep," and "mourn with them who mourn," draws from the afflicted heart the barbed dart, which has pierced it with agony. To charitably relieve the "poor, whom we always have with us, and whensoever we will we may do them good;" to wipe the tear from the furrowed face of the disconsolate widow; to rear the wretched orphan to life and usefulness; to sustain the hoary locks, bowed down with age, poverty, and pain; and to lead the poor and rising race, to the peaceful walks of industry, peace, and prosperity, is an important part of love without dissimulation.

THE manner in which our acts of love should be performed, is most beautifully described, by our divine Lord and Master, in his most instructive sermon upon the mount: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your father which is in

heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth ; that thine alms may be in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." *Mathew. vi. 1—5.* And that none may plead excuse from the performing this duty, it may be observed, that if with hearts of undisssembled love to God and man, our charity is only "two mites," or "a cup of cold water," according to our ability, it is a sacrifice with which God is well pleased. Hence there is no Christian so poor, who may not have the privilege of placing a pin in the glorious temple of God, which shall stand an everlasting monument of love to the great Architect.

FROM the preceding observations, we learn, that love without dissimulation, is the radical grace in the Christian's heart, and consists in unfeignedly worshiping and obeying God ; in sincere affectionate love to one another ; in seeking their spiritual and temporal happiness ; and in proposing, by example, the bright chain of Christian virtues, to allure the vicious from the paths of vice, and to establish the weak in faith and hope. "*Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. Tim. i. 1—4.*"

II. I SHALL now briefly consider the remaining exhortation in the text, and its propriety: *Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.* The first idea which presents itself to us, in connection with the former observations, is, that however we are to love our brethren without dissimulation, and seek their happiness, we are not to countenance evil in them, or love their sinful practices. Thus we are strictly commanded, "not to suffer sin upon a brother;" that is, we are not to approve of sin; and "to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." This sentiment is exemplified in the conduct of our blessed Lord and Master, by reproofing his disciple Peter, for not "favouring the things of God," though Jesus gave undeniable proofs of his love to Peter, both before and after the reproof was given.

If we sincerely love God, we shall abhor that which is abhorrent to the holiness of his nature: We shall repair to his sacred word and law, and there learn what is offensive to him, that we may say with the royal Psalmist, "*How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.*" This just abhorrence of sin will guard us against those sinful works of the flesh, which are enumerated in St. Paul's letter to the Gallatians, viz. "*Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, hatred, variance,*

emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." On the other hand, "*cleaving to that which is good,*" we shall practise the social and religious duties, and follow after the "*fruits of the spirit,*" as "*love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.*" We shall take to ourselves the armour of God ; we shall be girt with truth, the breast-plate of righteousness, our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit, and the practice of prayer.

THE propriety of this exhortation appears from its being essential to God's declarative glory, and the happiness of ourselves and brethren. For as "God is love," and all his proceedings are regulated by love, so the happiness of his intelligent creatures must be in exact proportion to their resemblance and imitation of him, and as their disposition and conduct are influenced by love. In heaven, the purest and most unbounded love prevails ; and there also the most consummate happiness prevails. On earth, whatever portion of happiness is allotted to man, can only be obtained by love to God and man, and the practice of those several duties to which it leads. On the other hand, the absence of love, and prevalence of hatred, wrath, and other dark passions, which are its opposites, are unfailing sources of misery to mankind. When men depart

from the order which heaven has established, their crime always carries its punishment with it. Behold them broken loose from the bands of love which were designed to unite them, and to promote their common welfare; and they breathe nothing but mutual ruin! destroying and destroyed, they become plagues to each other. The wild beast of the forest is not more savage than man, when he throws aside the law of love; nor is the pestilence more surely destructive to human life, than such a man is destructive to human happiness.

III. I now propose to draw some conclusions suitable to the present occasion. Although the speaker cannot claim the honour of being a member of the ancient fraternity of Free Masons, yet any person may learn, by attending to the constitutions of Masonry, that many of the sublime sentiments inculcated by the gospel, are the same sentiments which are inculcated by Masonry. The doctrine, which has now been offered you from the sacred pages, appears also in the masonic constitutions. For we find this article stands recorded first, as essentially requisite in all those who aspire to the honours of Masonry, viz. "Whoever from love of knowledge, interest, or curiosity, desires to be a Mason, is to know, that, as his foundation and great corner stone, he is firmly to believe in the eternal God, and to pay that worship which is due to Him, as the great Architect and Governor of the uni-

verse." "A Mason must observe the moral law. And if he rightly understand the royal art, he will never be an Atheist, or an irreligious libertine; and he will never act against the great inward light of his own conscience." From the same source of information, we also learn, that "whoever would be a Mason, should know how to practise all the private virtues. He should avoid all manner of intemperance or excess, which might prevent his performance of the laudable duties of his craft, or lead him into enormities, which would reflect dishonor upon the ancient fraternity." "He is to seek and acquire, as far as possible, the virtues of patience, meekness, self-denial, forbearance, and the like, which give him the command over himself, and enable him to govern his own family with affection, dignity, and prudence; at the same time checking every disposition injurious to the world, and promoting that love and service, which brethren of the same household owe to each other." "It is also necessary that all, who would be true Masons, should learn to abstain from all malice, slander, and evil speaking; from all provoking, reproachful, and ungodly language; keeping always a tongue of good report." By comparing these sentiments with the duties that the gospel enjoins, we shall see the duties of the Christian and the Mason, are perfectly compatible, that love to God and man, are enjoined by both, in the most express manner.

I SHALL now presume upon the liberty of considering an objection which is sometimes made against the institution, "That the masonic arcana are improper or inconsistent with public or private benefit. In answer to this objection, I observe every person has liberty to examine the cardinal principles of Masonry; these are published, and in almost every public discourse, by any member of the fraternity, are insisted upon, as consisting in the shining assemblage of religious and social virtues. This is also asserted by men of approved probity and piety. Certainly they merit our confidence upon this, as well as upon other subjects. In addition to these remarks, every person desirous of becoming a Mason, "may request the perusal of the by-laws; which being short, he may read in the presence of his friend, and be shewn a list of the members of the lodge: By which he will be better able to judge, whether he could associate with them, and render a ready conformity to their rules." Hence it follows, that there is no impropriety in a society retaining certain secrets for its own benefit. Every society, civil and religious, claims this indisputable privilege; and much to be lamented, that many of them retain this privilege no better. The church of Christ ought to be *a garden enclosed*, and many parts of its discipline confined wholly to its own members. Whoever has enjoyed the pleasures of domestic life, will readily conceive of family secrets, which are essential to the existence and

happiness of a family. If secrets are improper, why should the pen of inspiration commend the *faithful spirit who concealeth the matter*, and condemn the *tale-bearer who revealeth secrets*, and caution us not to “meddle with him that *flattereth with his lips*?” We may fairly infer, that if we know the principles of Masonry are calculated to promote brotherly love and charity, and contain nothing incompatible with religion or good government, it is as much as is necessary to be known by those who are not members.

ANOTHER objection has frequently been drawn from the “immoral lives of many of its members.” This objection will be lamented by all good Masons. However, the best institutions may be abused by unworthy characters: Such characters have mingled themselves in the purest societies. But are we hence to reject good and wholesome laws, because some unworthy members of society have broken those laws? Are we to discard important and precious truths, because some impostors have professedly received those truths? And is it ingenuous to censure the benevolent principles of an institution, because some of its members stray from those principles? No; let us “abhor the evil, and cleave to that which is good.” Let us entertain a proper disgust against all vicious hypocritical conduct; blame the culprit, but love the truth.

IN connection with the last objection, is the one of "its endangering the peace of civil government." The constitutions of Masonry particularly enjoin, that "whoever would be a true Mason is farther to know, by the privileges of his order, his obligations, as a subject and citizen, will not be relaxed but enforced. He is to be a lover of peace, and obedient to the civil powers which yield him protection, and are set over him where he resides or works." "Now, if any brother forgetting for a time the rules of his craft, and listening to evil counsels, should unhappily fall into a contrary conduct, he is not to be countenanced in his crimes or rebellion against the state; but he forfeits all the benefits of the lodge, and his fellows will refuse to associate or converse with him in private, while he continues in his guilt; that no offence may be given to lawful government." If, therefore, there has been any thing attached to Masonry, by wicked and designing men, which does not belong to it, there can be no propriety in censuring the institution on that account. As Americans, we profess to love the principles of liberty; but are the principles of liberty to be charged with all the horrid enormities and fanaticism which have filled France under the specious name of liberty? Is the benevolent religion of our adorable Lord and Saviour, chargeable with the guilt and tortures of the inquisition, or the expenditure of that blood and treasure, which have so frequently devastated the earth? No; we are happy in asserting that the religion of Jesus

breathes "*glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to man;*" let us then discriminate between the beauty of truth, and the wickedness of men.

I SHALL now conclude with an address upon the occasion.

Gentlemen of the honorable and ancient Society of
 FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS,

I PRESUME I shall be excused for not adapting my address to the particular genius of the craft, for the reasons already mentioned. I conceive it is not your wish, as it is not my design to approach you in the language of fulsome adulation or flattery. As far as I am acquainted with the design and sentiments of your institution, I entertain a high opinion of its virtuous principles and beneficial effects, when its precepts are punctually obeyed. As I wish to disseminate the blessings, which your institution is calculated to disseminate among mankind, suffer me to remind you, of the great obligations you are under, to adorn your doctrine, by squaring your actions upon the true level of your professed principles. This will engage your attention to the discipline and regulations of your order; as well as guard you against all innovations in your institution. Your personal conduct will be attended to, that you may reflect honour upon the institution; silence the tongue of calumny, by cutting off all occasion of reproach from those who seek occasion to speak evil of you.

ALTHOUGH theological disputation, and political dissensions are banished your favoured retreat; yet your principles call upon you to be good and faithful citizens, and active in the discharge of some of the leading duties of christianity. If the sentiments that have now been exhibited before you, be congenial with your institution, suffer me to urge upon you an attention to the "*one thing needful*:" Love, adoration, and worship, which is justly due to the Supreme Architect of the Universe—A firm dependence upon the merits of our great Lord and Master Jesus Christ—The cultivation of all the religious and social affections and graces, as realizing your accountability to your Supreme Lord and Master, for all the deeds done in the body.

FINALLY GENTLEMEN,

MAY your festive seasons be crowned with innocent and rational mirth; and may temperance, sobriety, and "love without dissimulation" pervade your whole fraternity, and like odorous precious perfume, gladden and invigorate every member. If these things abound among you, then will you pass from one degree of grace to another, and your path will be like that of the just, which shall shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day. May you be guided by infinite light and life, through all the vicissitudes of life's uncertain stage, and at last triumphantly enter, with all the truly righteous, to the fraternity above, where peace, love, and joy, reign eternal.

I SHALL add only a few words by way of address to the respectable and attentive auditory.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS,

WE may learn from the preceding observations, that the virtues which should adorn the Masonic character, should also adorn our characters. The gospel enjoins the duties of love to God and our neighbor, as essential to our present peace, and as a temper of heart preparatory to the enjoyment of an incorruptible inheritance and glory, which fadeth not away. How astonishingly great the love of God towards guilty man! That *He* whose powerful word called into existence the boundless universe! who formed the heavens with all their shining hosts; that even *He* should so love the world, as to give his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life! May we then possess that faith in Jesus, which works by love, and purifies the heart. Thus prepared by grace, may we, with God's word in our hand, unfeigned love in our hearts, and heaven in our view, press forward, till we reach the prize of eternal life and glory. A M E N.

F I N I S.